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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7185th meeting
Wednesday, 28 May 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Oh Joon	(Republic of Korea)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Ms. King
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: On 25 May, according to reports, slightly more than 60 per cent of Ukraine's eligible voters cast a ballot in the country's early presidential elections. An unprecedented number of national and international monitors observed the polls and concluded in statements that the election, to quote one statement,

> "was characterized by high voter turnout and the clear resolve of the authorities to hold what was a genuine election largely in line with international commitments and with a respect for fundamental freedoms in the vast majority of the country. This was despite the hostile security environment in two eastern regions".

At the same time, the numbers across Ukraine varied considerably, even in areas under full Government control, with lower participation in Odessa and elsewhere in southern Ukraine. In parts of eastern Ukraine, eligible voters were denied their right to vote due to the seizure or blocking of polling stations, the destruction of electoral equipment, intimidation and violence. The United Nations is deeply concerned by the actions of those who have attempted to derail the elections and prevent citizens from having a say in their country's leadership.

According to preliminary results, Mr. Petro Poroshenko won in the first round, obtaining 55 per cent of the vote. This morning, the Secretary-General spoke over the phone to congratulate the President-elect on having received a strong mandate from the people, who expect him to move quickly to steer the country away from political, economic and social instability and towards security, greater prosperity and genuine democratic governance. The Secretary-General welcomed President-elect Poroshenko's stated intention to engage immediately in dialogue and de-escalation. He affirmed that exercising restraint and reaching out to eastern Ukraine was critical.

Despite what we at the United Nations hope will be the beginning of a new chapter for Ukraine, violence rages on in parts of the east, causing loss of life and injuries. Since the last Security Council consultations on the issue, held on 21 May, both Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts experienced a dramatic increase in deadly fighting. As a result, the numbers of casualties and wounded continue to increase on both sides, with civilian causalities reported as well. While we are unable to confirm the details, the Secretary-General is concerned by reports of scores of casualties; by suggestions regarding the circulation and use of heavier weaponry in the east; and by allegations of arms, fighters and trucks entering Ukraine.

On 22 May, dozens of Ukrainian servicemen were killed and many others wounded in an ambush by unknown armed persons at a military checkpoint in the city of Volnovakha.

On 26 May, fierce fighting ensued between Government forces and armed groups when armed militia stormed and attempted to seize control of the Donetsk international airport. Ukrainian forces, after conducting an air and land operation, are now reportedly back in control of the airport, but sporadic fighting continues close to the airport.

We are aware of video footage purporting to show a United Nations-marked helicopter allegedly being used inside Ukraine. The United Nations is unable to determine the veracity of the images. I would note that the Ukrainian authorities have affirmed to the United Nations that no helicopters with United Nations markings are being used in operations being conducted inside Ukraine. We recall that it is the responsibility of all troop-contributing countries that provide contingent-owned equipment to peacekeeping missions to remove all logos and signage bearing the United Nations name once such equipment has been repatriated to the home

country or is no longer used for official United Nations purposes.

In a deeply disturbing and alarming development, following the capture of four Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitors on 26 May, today the OSCE headquarters in Kyiv lost contact over several hours with an additional 11 OSCE monitors, who were assumed to have been captured or held by an armed group in Donetsk oblast. Following my phone conversation earlier today with him, the head of the OSCE monitoring mission, Ambassador Apakan, just informed me that the 11 monitors have been released in Donetsk. There is still no news of the four monitors who have been held for the past two days. The Secretary-General is appalled that international staff have again been put in such grave danger. He calls for their immediate release and appeals to all with influence to assist.

The Secretary-General remains committed to helping find a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Ukraine and to assisting the country in prevailing over the many difficult challenges that lie ahead. In that vein, he appeals to the international community to use the outcome of the elections as an opportunity to unite in support of a peaceful, stable, prosperous and united Ukraine.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing this afternoon.

We congratulate the Ukrainian people on the success of their historic presidential elections on Sunday, 25 May. The elections have been endorsed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as having been held largely in line with Ukraine's international commitments and with respect for fundamental freedoms. After the turmoil of recent months, that is an outstanding achievement, which demonstrates the determination of the Ukrainian people to exercise their democratic rights and to set Ukraine on a new path towards stability. They have produced a Government whose legitimacy cannot be questioned and that deserves the full support of the international community. The decisive victory of Mr. Poroshenko sends a clear signal that the Ukrainian people are united in their demand for reform.

We congratulate Mr. Poroshenko on his election. We welcome his commitment to reaching out to all regions, to normalizing relations with Russia and to working to restore stability and calm. The United Kingdom remains firmly committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the whole of Ukraine. We look forward to working with Mr. Poroshenko and the Ukrainian Government in their efforts to build a safe, independent and prosperous country. We also pay tribute to the staff of the Ukrainian Election Commission and to the OSCE for their tireless commitment to ensuring that the elections were a success, and particularly to those who face threats of violence and intimidation in the east of the country.

The high turnout on Sunday offers a powerful rebuke to those illegal armed groups that sought to deny the citizens of Donetsk and Luhansk their democratic rights and that continue to pursue an armed campaign to destabilize eastern Ukraine. Opinion polling in March showed that 79 per cent in the east of Ukraine wanted to vote in the elections. In May, despite the rising levels of intimidation against election officials, activists and ordinary citizens, 62 per cent still wanted to vote. It is deeply regrettable that many in Donetsk and Luhansk were prevented from doing so. The elections gave Ukrainians the opportunity to express their views in a peaceful and democratic manner.

It is telling that the response of illegal armed groups to that display of national unity was an attempt to seize control of Donetsk international airport. While Ukraine sought a national consensus through the ballot box, those groups immediately resorted to violence. We respect the Ukrainian Government's right to respond to such armed attacks, to protect its citizens and to reassert control over its sovereign territory. No country could possibly accept illegal armed insurgents taking control by force of public buildings and a key national infrastructure, such as an international airport. The Ukrainian authorities have acted with admirable restraint in the fact of repeated provocation. We continue to urge them to ensure that their security response remains measured, proportionate and respects the safety and security of non-combatants.

Since 21 February, the Ukrainian authorities have repeatedly demonstrated that they are committed to deep-rooted reform of Ukraine's political system and to making a decisive break with past corruption and injustices. The issue of granting greater autonomy to Ukraine's regions has been on the agenda from the

start. In line with its commitment and those undertaken in Geneva, on 17 April they embarked on an intensive effort to initiate an inclusive national dialogue. That process represents a genuine opportunity for all Ukrainians to address their grievances peacefully. There can therefore be no justification for armed groups to continue to press their cause through violence. We therefore call on the insurgents to lay down their arms, renounce violence and join in this debate. We also call on the Russian Federation to take immediate action to prevent illegal crossings of insurgents and weapons across its border into Ukraine.

We are deeply concerned by two separate incidents of abduction involving monitors from the OSCE special monitoring mission in eastern Ukraine. We welcome the release of 11 monitors after their detention earlier today in Donetsk, but four others who went missing on Monday are still unaccounted for. The detention of OSCE personnel is completely unacceptable, and we call for their immediate and unconditional release. The special monitoring mission has a vital role to play, often under difficult circumstances. We pay tribute to their continuing work.

Sunday's elections provide us all with an opportunity to look past the turmoil of recent months and to focus on the future. We welcome the recent statements by the Russian Federation of its intention to respect the right of the Ukrainian people to choose their new President and its commitment to reduing the threat of further external intervention in Ukraine's internal affairs by withdrawing its forces from the Ukrainian border. Those are positive steps towards de-escalation, but more action is needed. Continued instability is not in the interests of the people of Ukraine or in the interests of its neighbours and those countries that value their relations with Ukraine. The actions of illegal armed groups have resulted in scores of tragic and unnecessary deaths and the disruption of the Ukrainian economy and public services in the east. That is hurting the very people that those groups claim to represent and is denying them a voice in determining Ukraine's future.

Following the Geneva agreement of 17 April and the OSCE road map of 7 May, we have a viable political framework in place. Ukraine has already made much progress towards implementing these agreements, including notably the adoption on 20 May of the memorandum of peace and concord. Our focus must now be on promoting an inclusive, transparent and accountable national dialogue as an alternative to violent insurgency. We welcome the three rounds of dialogue that have already taken place with OSCE facilitation. That national dialogue should allow all parties to contribute their views on issues such as decentralization, local self-governance, language and national minorities, balance of powers, State society relations and Ukraine's role in Euro-Atlantic and Eur-Asian security.

The past few months have seen deep divisions in the Security Council over Ukraine. Some of those divisions will undoubtedly persist; in particular, along with the overwhelming majority of the international community, the United Kingdom will not recognize or accept Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. However, Sunday's elections provide the Council with a basis for coming together behind some key principles: respect for the will of the people of Ukraine, recognition of the legitimacy of the new authorities in Ukraine, rejection of armed insurgency and attempts to destabilize Ukraine and undermine the rule of law, and strong support for the efforts of the authorities in Ukraine to tackle the many formidable challenges that confront them in an inclusive and democratic manner.

The frameworks are in place to take those principles forward. The United Kingdom urges all Council members and the international community as a whole to join wholeheartedly in a concerted, constructive and united international approach.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his update on the situation in Ukraine, which by all accounts remains tense. The armed attacks of last week that led to the deaths of 16 Ukrainian soldiers near Donetsk represent a very serious escalation of the crisis. We condemn attacks against security forces carrying out legitimate orders. We note the conduct of presidential elections on 25 May and the outcome. We see the election of a new President as a significant first step towards the normalization of the situation in Ukraine. Issues of human rights still need to be addressed, as do improving the economy, fostering inclusiveness and strengthening national cohesion and reconciliation.

An improvement in bilateral relations between Russia and Ukraine remains central to resolving the crisis in Ukraine. That is why we welcome the decision of Russian President Vladimir Putin to respect the outcome of the elections in Ukraine. We also welcome the offer of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

to start a dialogue with the incoming leadership of Ukraine. President-elect Poroshenko has also indicated that he will reach out to Russia. Those are encouraging signs that convince us that the doors to a diplomatic solution remain open.

We reiterate our position that dialogue among all concerned parties and stakeholders is the path to sustainable peace, security and stability in Ukraine. We urge all armed groups in eastern Ukraine to lay down their arms, refrain from violence, and desist from occupying public buildings, erecting road blocks, illegally detaining international officials and challenging the authority of the State. We restate our position that the declaration of a people's republic of Donetsk and other separatist and secessionist pronouncements violate the Constitution of Ukraine and are therefore of no legal effect. We call on all concerned to respect the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for the briefing he has just provided to the Council.

Jordan welcomes the successful holding of presidential elections in Ukraine, despite the exceptional circumstances in the country caused by the illegal actions of lawless individuals and rebels seeking to prevent a successful voting process. It is our hope that the elections will signal a return to stability in Ukraine and lead it down the road to democracy. We commend the efforts of the Ukraine Government to ensure successful elections by eliminating obstacles in order to allow all Ukrainians to vote for their future. Now that Ukrainians have been able to vote fully and freely, the international community must respect their choice. We urge the international community to recognize the results of the election and to work with President-elect Petro Poroshenko so as to enable him to meet his people's aspirations to a better future.

We express our concern about continuing acts of violence and criminality in eastern Ukraine, especially in the Donestk region, where there have been a number of casualties. Jordan reaffirms Ukraine's legitimate rights, guaranteed under international law, to protect its territorial integrity, sovereignty and the security of its citizenry. The exercise by the authorities of their right to calm tensions and restore stability must be in line with international law and international humanitarian law. We reaffirm our call on all influential parties to persuade the rebels to lay down their weapons and to withdraw from the buildings and facilities they are occupying.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his comments today and for his engagement on the Ukrainian issue, including through trips to Ukraine.

Ukrainians turned out in historic numbers on Sunday, uniting to express their political will to choose freely their own future. The United States congratulates the people of Ukraine on having voted in large numbers to express their clear desire for a united, democratic and peaceful Ukraine. The election reaffirms Ukraine's commitment to the democratic process. We look forward to working with President-elect Poroshenko and the people of Ukraine to build on this victory for democracy in order to create a more unified, secure, transparent and prosperous Ukraine.

We note the importance of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) judgement that the election was largely in line with Ukraine's international commitments and demonstrated respect for fundamental freedoms in the vast majority of the country. Thousands of independent electoral observers — international and domestic — supported the OSCE determination. We thank the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the other international and non-governmental organizations and observers who contributed to the effort.

But as we celebrate the successful 25 May presidential election, we must also condemn the actions of those who sought to derail the voting in parts of eastern Ukraine. In particular, we condemn the actions of pro-Russian armed separatists operating in Donetsk and Luhansk, who attacked district election commissions and polling stations and intimidated election workers, notably through abductions, death threats, forced entry into private homes, the seizure of equipment and election materials, and the shooting of a candidate proxy. Those illegal actions constituted attempts to obstruct the election and to interfere with citizens' rights to participate.

Yet even in those two regions of the east where pro-Russian separatist groups sought to disenfranchise

the population, some courageous Ukrainians endeavoured to vote. The United States commends the resolve of the Ukrainian people to participate despite the threats, provocations, and violence. We take particular note of the Central Election Commission, which established special accommodations to enfranchise voters in the areas where separatists worked to disrupt voting, by allowing citizens to vote at alternate locations, and which made voting arrangements for Crimeans to vote outside of Ukraine's Crimea region, which remains under Russian occupation.

President-elect Poroshenko and the Ukrainian Government have many challenges before them. We are heartened by the President-elect's stated goal to make national reconciliation a priority. Forging a common political vision will be essential. In that regard, we welcome the Ukrainian Government's intention to continue the OSCE-supported national unity round tables, which have allowed Ukrainians from all regions and all political views to come together to discuss their differences and their common interests in a peaceful, unified and stable Ukraine. We also welcome the Rada's 21 May memorandum of understanding and peace, which calls on all citizens to abandon radical actions and hatred and to protect, promote and build a democratic, sovereign and united Ukraine.

We are also encouraged by President-elect Poroshenko's willingness to seek greater decentralization for the regions, to pursue constitutional reforms following the election and to engage in dialogue with Russia. Since the Russian Federation has stated that it will respect the will expressed by the Ukrainian people, we urge Russia to recognize the results of Sunday's election and begin to engage constructively with President-elect Poroshenko and the Ukrainian Government to resolve the crisis.

Despite the progress made with Sunday's election we are deeply concerned by the increased violence in Donetsk and Luhansk, including the seizure of the Donetsk airport by separatists, and we are disturbed by ongoing reports that separatists continue to carry out criminal actions in parts of eastern Ukraine. We recognize that Ukraine must uphold law and order on Ukrainian territory, and we call on the separatists to disarm and end the violence. Of particular concern are reports of the detention of international monitors from the OSCE after they were stopped at separatist checkpoints in the Donetsk region. We condemn the abductions and call on Russia to use its influence with the separatists to secure the the immediate release of the monitors and their unimpeded access throughout Ukraine. We also remain concerned by reports that armed groups and weapons continue to cross the border from Russia into Ukraine. We believe Russia can and must act to stem such provocative actions along the Russia-Ukraine border.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my Government's continued support for the aspirations of the people of Ukraine to a prosperous, sovereign, independent, and united Ukraine, including the Crimea region, with strong ties to both East and West. We remain committed to working with Ukraine and other partners in order to seek de-escalation and a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing.

China has taken note of the presidential election held in Ukraine on 25 May and respects the choice made by the people of Ukraine. At present, he continuing problems and occasional outbreaks of armed conflict and violence in Ukraine have resulted in heavy casualties and loss of life, about which China is deeply concerned.

Regarding the situation in Ukraine in general, I would like to stress the following points.

First, China adheres consistently to the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, including Ukraine. We urge all parties in Ukraine to remain calm and restrained, bring an immediate halt to the violence, avoid harming innocent people and prevent the further escalation of tension and worsening of the situation. China hopes to see stability return with the early restoration of law and order in the country.

Secondly, the crisis in Ukraine involves complex historical factors and ethnic conflicts. A political solution is the only way to defuse it. We hope all the parties will continue with dialogue and negotiations and will push for a settlement of the crisis through political means, by giving full recognition to the legitimate rights, interests and aspirations of every region and ethnic group in the country, accommodating all parties' legitimate concerns and achieving a balance of interests among them.

Thirdly, China supports the international community as it continues to use its good offices to ease the situation in Ukraine. It is an urgent priority that all parties refrain from making threats and imposing sanctions and return to the consensus of the four-party Geneva talks to ensure full implementation of that consensus and, on the basis of that agreement, resume the four-party talks and allow political dialogue to play the major role in reaching a negotiated settlement to the crisis, seeking common ground while avoiding conflict and confrontation.

Fourthly, China has always adopted a fair and objective approach on the issue of Ukraine and has advocated a three-principles initiative that we had proposed for a political solution to the Ukraine crisis. We have continued, in our own way, working with all parties. We are in favour of any option that is conducive to easing tensions and promoting a negotiated political settlement, and we are willing to continue our constructive role.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, , Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, for his intervention.

Luxembourg welcomes the holding on 25 May of the presidential election, during which the Ukrainian people expressed their will. The election featured a high voter turnout and a clear willingness on the part of the authorities to organize a genuine election, conducted largely in line with international commitments and with respect for fundamental freedoms. In the vast majority of the country's regions the election passed off under good conditions. Despite the hostile security climate, voting was held successfully in 9 of 22 and 2 of 12 electoral districts in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk respectively. Despite the situation in eastern and southern Ukraine, including Crimea, participation was generally high. The election observation mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in which Luxembourg has been an active participant, gave the conduct of the election an initial generally positive assessment.

The success of this election is due first and foremost to the citizens of Ukraine. Their choice was clear. They voted for a united, stable Ukraine enjoying full sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Luxembourg condemns the violence that has gone on for several weeks, particularly in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, where several towns and administrative buildings remain under the control of separatist armed militias. We are concerned about the numerous cases of killings, torture, beatings, kidnappings — especially of journalists — committed by well-armed and well-organized anti-Government groups.

We also condemn in the strongest terms the abduction of 15 observers deployed with the OSCE's special observation mission in the Donetsk region. We welcome the release today of the 11 observers who had been arrested, but we remain concerned about the fate of the four observers who have been missing since Monday. They should be released safe and sound, immediately and unconditionally.

At this crucial moment for democracy in Ukraine, we call on Russia to translate into action its declarations of respect for the will of the Ukrainian people. As the Heads of State and Government of the European Union said yesterday, we expect the Russian Federation to cooperate with the new, legitimately elected President, to continue withdrawing armed forces from the Ukrainian border and to use its influence with the armed separatists to calm the situation in eastern Ukraine. Russia should give priority to preventing the movement of separatists and arms in Ukraine.

Ukrainians have given a strong mandate to President-elect Poroshenko, who must now commit to resolving the crisis through the rule of law and dialogue initiated by the Ukrainian Government. In that context, we commend the holding of three round tables organized by the Government, with OSCE support, in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mykolaiv. We encourage the Ukrainian authorities to use the legitimacy of the newly elected President to pursue this national dialogue with the general public and civil society in every region of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Parliament's adoption on 20 May of the memorandum for peace and harmony, which identifies priorities in the area of decentralization and guarantees of respect for the status of the Russian language, is an important step in the right direction. Prompt constitutional reform towards decentralization, which should unite all parties, while benefiting from the Council of Europe's expertise in that area, is a key aspect of that process. The rights of national minorities must be fully respected, in accordance with the rules in force at the Council of Europe.

We reaffirm our commitment to the Geneva statement of 17 April. We commend the role of the OSCE special observer mission in contributing to the implementation of that statement, as well as the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities in that direction. We again call on the Russian Federation to take steps to fully implement the joint statement. We unreservedly support the additional efforts of the OSCE and its Chairman-in-Office, given that Ukrainians must have ownership of the process.

We support the good offices of the Secretary-General and his team. We strongly hope that, with the consistent and joint support of the international community, the holding of the presidential election on 25 May and the selection of a new President with unquestionable legitimacy will make it possible for Ukraine to start afresh and emerge from a crisis that has lasted too long. The citizens of Ukraine aspire to democracy, the rule of law, peace and prosperity. Their choice, like the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, must be respected.

Ms. King (Australia): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing.

Australia congratulates Ukraine on the successful holding of presidential elections on 25 May. The high turnout, in which millions people cast ballots across the country, reflects the determination of the Ukrainian people to chose their own Government without interference. It is a demonstration of their commitment to a sovereign, democratic and independent Ukraine.

We commend the work of the Ukrainian electoral authorities and the willingness of the Ukrainian political parties to participate and support the electoral process in difficult circumstances. We also commend the observer mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for its efforts across the country. We welcome the OSCE's preliminary findings that the elections were held in line with international standards and respect for fundamental freedoms. We congratulate President-elect Petro Poroschenko, who has been given a clear mandate to govern Ukraine.

Regrettably, not all Ukrainians were able to vote. In two areas in eastern Ukraine, pro-Russian separatist forces prevented many polling stations from opening, depriving of their right to cast their ballots. We commend the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities to perform their electoral duties in those areas in the face of threats, intimidation and violence. Due to the unlawful annexation of Crimea, the Ukrainian citizens in that region were unable to cast their votes at all. We applaud those who travelled from the Crimean peninsula specifically in order to vote elsewhere in Ukraine. That was a clear expression of support on their part for a democratic and unified Ukraine.

The restoration of stability in the east presents a very serious challenge for the new Ukrainian Government. Pro-Russian groups continue their efforts to destabilize the region, attacking Ukrainian forces, occupying administrative buildings and targeting major infrastructure, such as Donetsk airport. Reports that militants have attempted to cross the border from Russia into Ukraine in the past few days are deeply concerning. It is essential that Russia control its borders to prevent any such incursions. In such circumstances of continued destabilization and the use of force by separatists, the Ukrainian authorities have the right to protect their own citizens and to re-establish control over their territory. They should continue to do so in a manner proportionate to the circumstances.

Given the current instability, the efforts of journalists and monitors are particularly crucial. We condemn the continuing attacks by separatists on journalists, as the OSCE Representative on Media Freedom, Ms. Mijatović, stated on 23 May. Journalists are deliberately targeted for doing their job of trying to tell the outside world of the events taking place in Ukraine. We condemn the killing of an Italian journalist and his assistant near Sloviansk on 24 May. We are also deeply concerned about reports that the four missing OSCE monitors in the Donetsk region are being held by separatists. They must be released immediately. While we, of course, welcome the safe release today of 11 OSCE monitors, we share the Secretary-General's concern that international staff in Ukraine continue to be placed in great danger. We agree with him that the detention of international staff is completely unacceptable.

The conduct of the presidential elections on 25 May was a central element of the OSCE road map for the stabilization of Ukraine. The country now has the opportunity to secure a stable and peaceful future. We welcome the President-elect's commitment to travelling to the east and to engage closely with the communities there to overcome their differences. Such an inclusive approach will be crucial to ensuring a successful constitutional reform process.

We welcome President Putin's statement that Russia will respect the election outcome. It is now time for serious dialogue between Russia and Ukraine and an express commitment on the part of Russia to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. That is so clearly in the interest of both countries. As Australia's Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, said on 26 May, Australia stands with the people of Ukraine, who have shown through the election their commitment to democracy and political and economic stability and to determining their own Ukrainian future. We share the Secretary-General's desire to see the international community unite in support of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Ukriane. Australia looks forward to working with the new Ukrainian leadership.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

The Ukrainian crisis has recently seen a turning point with the election of Mr. Poroshenko as President of the Republic. On Sunday 25 May, the Ukrainian people at last made its voice heard through the free and transparent elections despite the violence by separatist armed groups in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the east of the country. In the first round, there was a rapid and clear result. We welcome Mr. Poroshenko's victory. We affirm that we are fully ready to work with him. From the first round, with its high turnout, the election demonstrated to us the aspiration of most Ukrainians for unity.

I would like to briefly come back to the elections. First, they were free, as there were no fewer than 21 registered candidates. That number speaks to the vast array of policies on which all Ukrainians were urged to vote on Sunday in order to build their future. There was not only one candidate or a predetermined outcome. Next, they were tansparent, as 2,784 international observers were accredited to ensure their smooth conduct. Yesterday, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reported that the election respected democratic norms. The President-elect is therefore fully legitimate. We will closley review the results of the Central Electoral Commission and the assessment to be made by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on the conduct of the elections. In passing, I note that the results also affirm, as if it were necessary, the extent to which the propaganda condemning the influence of the fascists in Ukraine was baseless. The two parties of the extreme right received less than 3 per cent of votes.

The elections are therefore good news, given that their conduct was threatened on many occasions. However, we recall that they took place in a particularly difficult security context. The situation in the Donbass region remains of great concern. Human rights violations and restrictions on the freedom of the press are increasing. Two journalists were killed last Saturday. Four OSCE monitors were abducted in Donetsk and are still being detained. They must be released immediately. Donetsk airport was occupied by armed separatist groups, before being retaken by Ukrainian forces. The armed separatist groups must immediately cease their activities. We call on all those who have influence over them to use that influence to allow for a return to calm. Finally, let us no forget that Crimea remains occupied.

In this tense situation, Sunday's elections represent nonetheless an opportunity. Mr. Poroshenko, who will take the reins of Ukraine in early June, will have three priorities: to restore calm, establish an inclusive Government and undertake reforms. Those three priorities should be based on national dialogue, which must be extended and deepened.

Today, for Ukraine, there is no other way forward than the path of unity and reconciliation. In that context, we hope that Mr. Poroshenko will work to consolidate the unity of his country by continuing the process of Ukrainian national dialogue launched with the support of the OSCE on 14 May, and by supporting the implementation of the memorandum on peace and harmony, adopted by the Rada on 20 May. Those initiatives, which provide for inclusive constitutional reform for decentralization and guarantee the status of the Russian language, are steps in the right direction.

The process must first and foremost be led by Ukraine itself, with the support of the OSCE. The European Union stands ready to support those efforts, as recalled by the Heads of State in their declaration at the Council of Europe yesterday. However, it is up to the international community as a whole to stand by Ukraine in a useful way in writing the next pages of its history.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing on the latest developments in Ukraine and the status of the issues being dealt with by the good offices of the United Nations. Argentina continues to follow the situation

in Ukraine very closely and remains concerned by the developments in the eastern regions of the country.

With regard to the election process of last Sunday, Argentina, as a matter of principle and of general policy, does not comment on the results of elections, which are by their very nature under the exclusive jurisdiction of each State. We reiterate that due respect must be paid to Ukraine's conduct of its internal affairs, without any type of interference or intervention, be it military, political or economic, in matters that are under its own jurisdiction. Argentina respects the decision of the people of Ukraine.

We have repeatedly emphasized the need to establish conditions conducive to restarting the urgent dialogue process. We hope that the presidential elections held on 25 May will contribute to that and to a decrease in tensions by decreasing the risk of new violent confrontations and decreasing the spiral of violence, which if it continues, would have severe repercussions on the stability not only of Ukraine, but also the region. The actions of armed groups, unilateral actions and the human rights violations and abuses will only deepen the crisis and put the security and living conditions of the civilian population at risk.

We are concerned about reports of the disappearance of four members of the international observers team of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who have not been heard from since Monday. In that connection, we call on all parties concerned to take every possible step to ensure that the observers are immediately released unharmed. In particular, Member States with influence on the parties should bring positive pressure to bear to that end.

We are convinced that the only solution to the crisis in Ukraine is political and diplomatic. Therefore, we reiterate our call on all parties to exercise maximum self-restraint and contribute to a constructive dialogue. In that vein, the effective implementation by all parties of the measures agreed on in Geneva continues to be necessary to making progress in a dialogue process, which will encourage confidence between the various communities and assure all Ukrainians throughout the country that their main concerns and rights will be cared for.

Any violation or abuse of human rights is unjustifiable. The cases of killings, torture, abduction, harassment, illegal detention and intimidation must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. We therefore call on all the national and regional authorities of Ukraine to take effective steps not only to prevent human rights violations and protect human rights, but also to ensure that all security forces respect those rights.

Once again, we reaffirm that the international community should, on the one hand, focus its efforts on ensuring that the parties enter a constructive dialogue with full respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and respect for the rights of all minorities and, on the other, act strictly within the framework of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, with the objective of achieving domestic peace in the country and creating a climate conducive to sustainable, inclusive and prosperous development.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the report of Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and for the convening of this meeting.

My delegation closely followed the elections that took place on Sunday, 25 May, in which Mr. Poroshenko was declared the winner. We value the cooperation extended to the provisional Government of Ukraine, especially the support provided by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) by sending more than 1,000 electoral observers and logistical support, which was fundamental to the success of the elections.

We believe that the elections are a crucial step in the political process, which should restore the stability of the country on the basis of inclusive dialogue with full respect for minorities, human rights and the rule of law. Nevertheless, we deplore the fact that the electoral process did not cover the entire territory of Ukraine. We call on those groups that sought to prevent the elections from taking place normally to join the building of a new future in their country in which all groups and minorities will feel involved. We also recognize the major responsibility of the Ukrainian authorities, both the current and the elected ones, to undertake the political process in an orderly fashion. In that context, we deplore the violent events that took place in Donetsk in the days after the election, and we express our concern at the consequences of a potential escalation of the crisis.

Nevertheless, the political process has not come to an end with the elections. The fundamental

responsibilty falls to the Ukrainian authorities, but equally important is the contribution of countries of the region and regional organizations to continue cooperating in the finalization of the process. We also underscore the various initiatives of the Secretary-General and, definitely, those of the entire United Nations system, which has sought a political solution from the very beginning of the crisis.

We call on both the Government and separatist groups to establish common ground on the basis of which a dialogue can take place, thereby putting an end to all current areas of violence. We reiterate our support for the calls of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, for accountability for all human rights violations and abuses and for the perpetrators, whoever they may be, to br brought to justice.

Finally, Chile once again reaffirms the need to respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. A new phase is beginning in Ukraine. Accordingly, a new era of cooperation should begin in the Council in order to enable it to help establish the conditions for the Ukrainian people to pursue their sovereign future in peace and democracy.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing.

Chad welcomes the holding of presidential elections in Ukraine on 25 May and its turnout of more than 60 per cent. The Ukrainians were able to vote freely and elect Mr. Petro Poroshenko in a transparent manner, with 55 per cent of the vote in the first round. We congratulate the Ukrainian people and their new President-elect, Mr. Poroshenko. Despite the challenges in the eastern part of the country, where the ballot was disrupted by ongoing violence, the elections went smoothly. Chad hopes that the elections, whose proper conduct was attested to by all international observers, will endow the new President-elect with the legitimacy and authority necessary to establish trust among all components of Ukrainian society and preserve unity of the country while respecting its diversity.

The election of the new President-elect marks a major step in the consolidation of democracy and starts a new phase that should allow a process of stabilization and economic recovery in the country to be initiated through dialogue. The international community must support the new Ukrainian authorities in meeting the numerous challenges before them. While we welcome the important step taken in the presidential elections in Ukraine, Chad remains concerned by the situation in the eastern part of the country. Chad condemns the ongoing acts of violence in the east, which have led to several deaths and the kidnapping of four monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose immediate release we demand from their captors. Chad reiterates its call for the immediate cessation of fighting and invites all the parties to refrain from the use of force and to favour a peaceful way out of the crisis through dialogue.

In that regard, the task of bringing peace and reconciliation to all the Ukrainian people falls principally on the new President-elect in his capacity as President of all Ukrainians without exception. In that context, we invite the armed groups to lay down their arms and start direct negotiations with the new Ukrainian authorities in order to restore peace and preserve the country's unity. We believe that frank and open dialogue is the best response to all expectations and anxieties. Unilateral proclamations of independence on a part of the Ukrainian territory will not call into question the integrity and sovereignty of the country to which Chad remains committed.

In that perspective, Chad recognizes the importance of the mediation of the international community in general, and of the United Nations, the OSCE and Ukraine's neighbours in particular, in the search for a peaceful result to the crisis in Ukraine. Chad gives its full support to all good offices.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I thank the President for convening today's meeting. I also thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the situation in Ukraine. Rwanda welcomes Sunday's presidential elections. We congratulate President-elect Petro Poroshenko for his decisive victory that will provide him with the legitimacy required to end the Ukrainian crisis.

As reported by several national and international monitors, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), elections in most of Ukraine were free, fair and peaceful, with a high turnout of over 60 per cent, despite reported cases of polling irregularities and disruptions. However, it is unfortunate that Ukrainians in some areas in the eastern part of the country were denied the right to vote.

We commend the President-elect for his commitment to continuing the political dialogue, including with the separatists in eastern Ukraine. We recall that the Geneva declaration of 17 April provides a good basis for that dialogue. We are also encouraged by the Mr. Poroshenko's pledge to engage the Russian Federation in talks. We are equally encouraged by the willingness of the Russian Federation to engage in dialogue with the new Ukrainian leadership. In that regard, we reiterate our support for the Secretary-General and his good offices, aimed at finding a political and diplomatic solution to the crisis. We are convinced that he will seize the momentum to achieve a breakthrough with the support with the parties concerned.

Meanwhile, the continuing violence in the east, especially around the city of Donetsk, where a fierce battle for control of the airport took place, is alarming. We are also concerned about the killing of journalists and the abduction of international monitors representing the OSCE. We take note of the release of 11 monitors and call for the immediate release of the remaining four monitors who were abducted on Monday. We urge all armed protesters to disarm and respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Rwanda recognizes the legitimate right of the Government of Ukraine to restore law and order in the east and on the whole territory of Ukraine, as was reaffirmed by the President-elect. However, we call on the Ukrainian authorities to exercise that right in a proportionate manner, bearing in mind that the only sustainable way out of the crisis is through a political and inclusive dialogue as well as constitutional reforms aimed at further decentralization and the promotion of equality and rights of minorities, including cultural and linguistic rights.

Let me conclude by saying that the Ukrainian presidential elections of last Sunday were a turning point, as they have provided the country with a legitimate leader who has enough political capital to make peace among Ukrainians and to in the region. We call on the international community, particularly the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE and the Russian Federation, to support the new leadership in that political and diplomatic process.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): The people of Ukraine have spoken. Last Sunday, they cast their votes for the future of a united Ukraine in an election that was widely recognized as free and fair and in line with international standards by numerous international observers. As Ilkka Kanerva, head of the delegation sent to the elections by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said, "The impressive turnout ... offered a powerful rebuke to those who would challenge Ukraine's unity and progress".

Intimidations, kidnappings and seizures of ballot boxes and voting premises by pro-Russian separatists could not stop those who care for their country from expressing their will democratically and freely through a ballot box, in stark contrast to those who only know how to impose their will at gunpoint. Everywhere, including south-eastern Ukraine, the lead of President-elect Petro Poroshenko was clear and obvious, leaving no room whatsoever for speculations regarding the legitimacy of the election.

Importantly, Ukraine's Sunday election demolished the myth of Ukraine's radical extremism, which has been staple fodder for a repulsive anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign. It is time to put to rest once and for all the shameless incitement against and demonization of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, which have done enormous damage to relations between the two nations and led to bloodshed under false pretexts on Ukraine's soil.

The people of Ukraine have spoken. Sunday's election results confirmed what we knew all along. While many in eastern Ukraine have legitimate grievances regarding their socioeconomic conditions and the relationship between the centre and the regions, they do not seek Ukraine's fragmentation. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of Ukraine's citizens, including those in the east and south of the country, see their future in a united and democratic Ukraine.

The challenges facing the new President and his Government are enormous, as they will have to overcome decades of neglect and pervasive corruption, restore the rule of law, rebuild trust and confidence among the citizens and regions, as well as between the citizens and their Government, by implementing comprehensive and inclusive political and economic reforms. The national dialogue meetings and the recently adopted memorandum on peace and concord offer good grounds for openness and inclusiveness, as well as the involvement of the broadest groups of Ukraine's society as the country seeks to break away

from the corrupt legacy of past rule. We wish the President-elect and the people of Ukraine all the very best in that important endeavour.

At the same time, we stress once again that Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are non-negotiable and must be respected by all. We welcome the statements by Russia's leaders that they will respect the outcome of Ukraine's vote. It is now time for them to walk the walk. It is time for Russia to discard its propaganda war against Ukraine and to engage in a genuine and meaningful dialogue. We urge Russia to fully withdraw its troops from the Ukrainian border and to stop the free flow of arms, weaponry and foreign fighters into Ukrainian territory. Ukraine's borders and air space must be respected.

In view of Russia's influence on and contacts with illegal armed groups, it is key that Russia unequivocally denounce, condemn and disassociate itself from the militant separatism plaguing Ukraine's south-east. Such steps are essential to helping restore a sense of trust between the two neighbouring States and to embark on a path of de-escalation, on the basis of the 17 April Geneva statement and with the continued monitoring and support of the international community on the ground.

Crimea's occupation has led to growing numbers of internally displaced persons, who now number nearly 10,000. The countless acts of violence committed by heavily armed separatist groups — such as ongoing banditry and looting, extortions, intimidation, abductions, beatings, torture, bloody ambushes and killings — are in direct violation of the human and social rights of the people they falsely claim to represent. The separatists in eastern Ukraine defy the very basic principles of national and international law and flaunt their contempt for human rights. Cases of illegal self-proclaimed people's courts sentencing local officials to death, followed by actual executions, have been reported. The increasing involvement of foreign fighters, including Chechen mercenaries, is deeply worrying and may, if unchecked, spin out of control.

The false and dangerously misleading narrative of fighting Ukrainian fascists continues to be exploited. The deliberate targeting of journalists, including attacks, beatings and abductions, as well as the confiscation and destruction of their equipment, have been reported. A young Italian journalist lost his life. Such attacks must be firmly condemned. Only a few days ago, the self-proclaimed mayor of Sloviansk confirmed that his group alone held some 40 hostages. The overall number of hostages and forced disappearances is obviously higher and remains a cause of serious concern. For example, 12 high-ranking police officers were abducted by armed separatists in the Luhansk region on 26 May.

International monitors are increasingly under attack, including the abduction on Monday, 26 May, of four representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) special monitoring mission, which was the second such incident in two months. Earlier today, we received alarming information that another 11 OSCE monitors had been detained by pro-Russian separatists on their way from Donetsk to Dnipropetrovsk. They have now been released. Lithuania strongly condemns all interference with the work of international observers and urges all parties to ensure that they can carry out their important work in safety and security.

No country would sit idle and watch indifferently as groups of insurgents armed with illegally obtained weapons, increasingly with the help of foreign mercenaries, go about disrupting the functioning of the State and its very statehood by intimidation, violence and force. In the face of the ongoing onslaught against the State of Ukraine, we stress Ukraine's legitimate right to defend its statehood and territorial integrity from illegal separatist groups that have taken up arms against their own country and demonstrate utter disdain for its Constitution, its laws and its people. While reiterating our commitment to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, we stand ready to support its new leadership and the people of Ukraine on the path of democratic reforms and peace. The people of Ukraine have spoken. Each and every one of us must respect their choice.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The 25 May elections were a step in the right direction. As the President of Russia, Mr. Vladimir Putin, stated before they were conducted, "we respect the elections of the Ukrainian people". However, we would stop short of the euphoria that our Western colleagues have demonstrated. Elections are not a panacea. In evaluating them and their potential consequences, there is a need to take into account the events that preceded them and the context in which they took place. We cannot forget the havoc wreaked by those who opposed the legitimately elected President or the coup d'etat carried out with outside support and help from national radical forces. We cannot forget the tragedies that took

place in Odessa on 2 May and in Mariupol on 9 May. We cannot remain deaf to the mortar fire in the south-east, where punitive operations are being carried out.

We have to recognize that the elections were not totally free and democratic. A heavy influence was brought to bear, including the threat of physical violence, in favour of certain candidates, while others were forced to withdraw from the electoral race. The elections saw the violent suppresion of the mass media. The consolidation of the population was achieved essentially through the marginalization and terrorizing of entire regions and the spreading of anti-Russian propaganda.

However, today we cannot simply discuss the electoral process in one particular country. The Security Council has the entirely different mandate of bearing primary responsibility for international peace and security. When a portion of Ukraine is essentially at war, we in this Chamber should be talking about how to end the violence and to move the situation onto a more peaceful front by faciliating negotiations among all Ukrainian parties.

For Russia, that task is of particular importance, given that the military operations are taking place extremely close to our borders. Security Council members should call upon Kyiv to finally acknowledge the need to take the interests of all citizens of the country into account and to put a swift end to the punitive operations in the east and south. That is what is its citizens expect and what is required of Kyiv in line with its obligations under the Geneva declaration and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) road map. It would allow for genuine, nationwide dialogue to agree on comprehensive constitutional reforms. Genuine dialogue is needed rather than punitive operations behind the smoke screen of round tables organized without the participation of representatives of the east and south of the country.

It is interesting that immediately after the elections, the memorandum on peace and concord was somehow forgotten. Instead of seeking agreement among citizens, they are assaulted by insults. Russia is blamed for every possible problem. There are calls for to end the punitive operations swiftly by intensifying them. People are being pushed into the army and the so-called national guard. Those who do not want to kill their own people are dealt with. There has been increasing use of air assets, tanks, armoured vehicles and mortar guns, and the chaotic bombing and artillery fire against civilian targets, including schools, kindergartens and hospitals. In spite of the calls of the leaders of besieged cities, peaceful citizens are not allowed to leave military areas. There are no secure humanitarian corridors, and the Ukrainian authorities are taking no measure fo r the evacuation of children or the unification of separated families. The provisions of the 1989 (2011) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are violated, as are the basic safeguards stipulated in Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions.

We regret to note that some Council members continue to justify, in all possible ways, the military actions of the Kyiv powers. Today, indeed, a colleague qualified actions in that context as admirable in manifesting restraint. We would like to say: You shall answer to God, ladies and gentlemen.

There is much evidence in the mass media and video material on the use by Ukrainian forces of helicopters displaying United Nations markings. The latest such instance was observed as recently as 26 May in the skies over the Luhansk region. We call upon the United Nations Secretariat not to be passive in situations where United Nations rules are violated but to deal with the issue and take active measures to put an end to those practices that discredit the United Nations. A simple negation of the facts by the Kyiv authorities is not enough.

The road map of the OSCE contains plans to investigate all cases of mass killings. However, there has been no progress in that respect. The investigation of the incidents of 18 through 20 February in the Maidan, including repercussions of the case of the sniper, have not fared any better. There has been no response to our urgent calls for an international investigation into the tragic events in Odessa on 2 May, when, as is known, an unidentified lethal chemical substance was used, nor of the incident of 9 May in Mariupol. The Ukrainian side is avoiding serious interaction with international structures on this issue.

Representatives of the mass media face ongoing threats and persecution by the Ukrainian authorities, who prevent them from carrying out their professional activities and investigating the chaos in the country. Today everybody knows of the outrageous detention of journalists from the Russian television channel "Life News" and the cruel treatment they suffered. We have lost count of the cases of journalists who have been refused entry into Ukrainian territory or expelled on far-fetched pretexts. We express condolences to

the families of the Italian journalist and his Russian companion, who died at the hands of the Ukrainian forces.

We are seriously concerned about the situation of the two groups of OSCE observers. One group included a Russian citizen. We will do everything we can to find and liberate those who have not yet been freed. Nevertheless, we call attention to the fact that primary responsibility for the security of the observers attaches to the Ukrainian side. However, Kyiv has not yet concluded the internal State procedures for ratification of the memorandum of understanding with the OSCE guaranteeing the inviolability of staff of international missions. Ambiguity in the status of OSCE observers, who have been working in Ukraine for more than two months, is a genuine threat to their security.

In conclusion, we truly hope that the presidential elections of 25 May will nevertheless mark the beginning of a new, more constructive period in the internal political life of the Ukrainian State. However, for that, it must be backed by specific actions for broad national agreement. Ukrainian politicians have many times violently taken advantage of their people. It is our hope that this will not occur during the current crucial period of the country.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Republic of Korea.

My delegation thanks Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, for his briefing. The Republic of Korea congratulates Ukraine on holding successful presidential elections on 25 May. We are pleased to note that the elections were carried out in a fair and transparent manner, with a high turnout, despite the challenging security environment in the eastern part of the country. We believe that the election represents a step forward in the de-escalation of tensions.

In the light of that, we call on all sides to respect the results of the election and cooperate with the newly elected President and his Government. At the same time, we condemn election-related violence by illegal armed groups, including the forced closure of the district election commission and the intimidation of election officials.

We hope that the Ukrainian Government will now take this invaluable opportunity to lead an inclusive and transparent constitutional process that reflects the interest of all Ukrainian people, including minorities. In that regard we welcome President-elect Petro Poroshenko's announced plan to visit the eastern regions and to pursue cooperative solutions with all sides. In addition, the series of round tables as part of the national dialogue is also a welcome development. We believe it is essential to any sustainable solution to the crisis.

Despite the positive steps, we remain deeply concerned over the continuing escalation of tensions in eastern Ukraine, including the recent fighting between the armed separatist groups and Ukrainian security forces. We are also concerned over abductions of members of the OSCE monitoring mission near Donetsk. The safety and security of the members of the missions must be fully guaranteed.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that the stability and prosperity of Ukraine is critical not only to peace in Europe but also to the international community. We once again reaffirm our full support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the current situation in Ukraine. I thank Mr. Feltman, Under-Secretary-General, for his briefing. I thank all Council members for supporting the elections held by Ukraine on 25 May and for the kind recommendations and encouragement to the new Government and President-elect regarding their plans in consolidating Ukraine.

I thank the Council for sharing assessments of the elections, which coincide with the assessments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), one of the largest observer commissions. The OSCE stated that the presidential elections in Ukraine on 25 May were free, democratic and held in full conformity with national legislation and international standards. It has become an historic success of the Ukrainian people and their democratic State.

On 25 May, the people confirmed their readiness to protect their native land from existing external threats and their desire for peace and a European future, as well as an absolute rejection of Russian aggression. The vast majority of Ukrainian citizens — from all regions of the country, including occupied Crimea — participated in the vote at more than 90 per cent of the country's polling

stations, thereby confirming the full representativeness and legitimacy of their will.

It is important that the election results crushed all anti-Ukraine propaganda clichés. Were all the Ukrainian fascists or Nazis, when the so-called "ultra-nationalist" candidates gained minimum support in the elections? Where are all the phantom supporters of succession or of the federalization of Ukraine, when almost 90 per cent of the voters from all regions of the country, including occupied Crimea, cast their ballots for the candidates that stand for a unified Ukraine and its European integration? All participants in the presidential campaign acknowledged that it had been democratic and legitimate.

Mr. Petro Poroshenko received major support in all regions of Ukraine, including the eastern and southern regions, which confirms the strong will of the whole population of Ukraine for unity of the nation. The President-elect secured full legitimacy to fulfil his mandate on behalf of the entire Ukrainian nation.

Among his top priorities is to achieve stabilization and reconciliation of the eastern regions of Ukraine, which suffered from Russian propaganda and illegal activities of Russian insurgents and mercenaries. The President-elect has already announced that he plans to visit the Donbass region immediately after his inauguration, a clear signal to all in eastern Ukraine that their voices will be heard as long as they are peaceful. The 2014 presidential campaign was conducted at a time of social and political tensions, security challenges that Ukraine is facing for the first time in its modern history. Unfortunately, owing to the occupation of the territory of the autonomous republic of Crimea, it was impossible to set up electoral commissions and conduct the presidential election there. At the same time, citizens of Ukraine living in the occupied peninsula were given the opportunity to vote at polling stations in Kherson, which is close to Crimea, or at any other polling station in Ukraine.

The complex security situation in Donetsk and Luhansk significantly undermined the election process in those cities. According to the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions by the special monitoring mission, which can be found on the web page of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), serious problems were found in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including intrusions into district electoral commissions and their eviction and closure by armed groups, and intimidation of election officials, which included abductions, death threats, forced entry into private homes, seizure of equipment and election materials, and the shooting of a candidate proxy.

> "These illegal actions constituted an attempt to prevent the election [and] deny citizens the fundamental right to freely participate and elect their chosen representatives."

After the election, Kremlin officials promised to respect the choice of the Ukrainian people. In the light of what is happening now on the Russian-Ukrainian border and in the region, we are taking that with a grain of salt. On 21, 24 and 26 May, dozens of armed people attacked Ukraine's borders from the Russian side. Forty vehicles carrying armed personnel attempted to break through the Ukrainian frontier. We have still not had a reasonable answer from the Russian side to the question of what hundreds of men from the Chechen battalion are doing in Ukraine. They are not concealing their identity; they speak freely with reporters and admit that they have come from Russia to protect interests. What interests are Chechens going to protect in Ukraine? Those of the Greek Orthodox or of Slav ethnicity? We have also raised the question about what hundreds of heavily armed Russian Cossacks are doing in Ukraine, particularly those from the Wolves Centurion, a group with a notorious Second World War past. They are not concealing their identity either; they have been operating in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, and before that they were in Crimea.

Another question is why most of the leaders of the illegal, self-proclaimed authorities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are Russian citizens. Aleksandr Borodai, the self-proclaimed prine minister of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, is a Russian citizen from Moscow. Igor Strelkov Girkin, a military commander of terrorists in Sloviansk, is a Russian citizen and a Russian military intelligence special forces officer. Igor Bezler, a military commander of a terrorist group based in Horlivka, is also a Russian citizen and a colonel in the Russian army, as he has publicly admitted. Who authorized those Russian citizens to represent the people of Donbass, to speak on their behalf and call on them to sacrifice their lives and kill their compatriots? On election day, 25 May, a pro-Russian insurgent group attacked a polling station in Novoaidar. As a result, one was killed and Ukrainian law enforcement detained a group of 13 people whose leader appeared to be a Russian citizen.

Despite some hints of conciliatory rhetoric on the part of our Russian neighbour, which happens to be one of the permanent members of the Security Council, its aggression against a sovereign United Nations Member State has continued. In the wake of the election, we witnessed another brutal violation of Ukrainian territory by armed insurgent groups from the Russian side. Despite warnings passed on by Ukraine through diplomatic channels regarding a concentration on Russia's border with Ukraine of up to 40 trucks containing armed personnel, the Russian side took no steps to prevent their breakthrough into Ukrainian territory. On 27 May, around 4 a.m., a convoy consisting of several trucks and passenger cars made an attempt to cross the State border. After an exchange of fire with Ukrainian border guard servicemen, part of the Russian motorcade managed to break through and proceeded in the direction of the town of Antratsyt. This happened while Russian border guards did absolutely nothing. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that the armed groups' penetration into Ukrainian territory is organized, financed and encouraged from the Russian side.

Furthermore, the Russian Federation has failed to condemn Russian citizens' participation in mercenary activities in Ukraine and has done nothing to prevent armed groups' illegal penetration into the eastern part of Ukraine, thus conniving in such actions. We are in fact dealing with blatant aggression against Ukraine from the Russian side in the form of exporting instability into the territory of another country. Our law enforcement officers in the eastern regions of Ukraine are currently dealing with skilled, armed mercenaries who are ready to plunder, intimidate, torture and murder Ukrainian citizens. Today, armed pro-Russian groups began to attack peaceful citizens. They fired on a school and a residential area of Sloviansk. We have had no sign of any Russian condemnation of such acts. Instead, Russia has offered its humanitarian assistance to the population of eastern Ukraine, citing alleged appeals from local citizens and organizations. We would like to say to the Russian side that the only thing Russia can do for the people of Ukraine is to stop supporting the illegal military groups.

We appreciate the mediation role the Secretary-General has taken on with his recent statement on the peaceful settlement of the situation in the eastern region of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Government stands for a peaceful solution to the current situation. Peace can be achieved if the Russian side stops pouring professional mercenaries into Ukraine with the aim of destabilizing the situation in eastern Ukraine and stops encouraging separatism. We call on the Security Council and the international community to demand categorically that the Russian Federation cease its practice of provoking instability, withdraw all Russian armed forces, paramilitary organizations and groups, and citizens from Ukraine and fulfil their obligations undertaken under the Geneva agreement on Ukraine.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Russia to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): You looked at me, Mr. President, and I decided that I would say literally just a couple of words after all. Needless to say, I will not respond to the array of facts or pseudo-facts presented by my Ukrainian colleague, but I want to point out for the umpteenth time that the representative of Ukraine is ignoring the role of his own people. All his claims are directed at Russia, but the situation in eastern Ukraine arose at the very least after the Government overthrow in Kyiv on 22 February. We all know that perfectly well, and so do our Ukrainian colleagues, of course, but they prefer to ignore it, because they do not know what to say to the Ukrainian people. We again heard about the idea of Ukrainian unity. We have already expressed our concern in our statement, which I will not reiterate. However, blaming Russia will not resolve the issues of the Ukrainian people.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine for a further statement.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): As the Council knows, the Ukrainians are very patient people. We always find a way to agree. But in order to agree, there must be stability. In order to achieve stability, there cannot be a fuelling of instability. I asked many times what hundreds of armed Chechens were doing in Ukraine. What was their purpose? Had they come to to protect Ukrainian orthodoxy, or Slav ethnicity? I asked why hundreds of Cossacks in Crimea had come to destabilize the situation. That does not help us to resolve the issue but destabilizes the situation. Moreover, they are not hiding that or concealing who they are. I wondered what the Wolves Centurion, which was established in the 1950s and then formed the Cossack corpus of the Nazi Special Service, had come to do. To fight the fascists — those who themselves support Nazism? It is not very clear. It is unclear to us all what may happen if suddenly citizens of another country

appear in our country. A group of 200 people gathered in the streets, calling itself a people's republic and saying that they would lead it. That is what happened in Donetsk. A Russian citizen called himself Prime Minister. What does that help? Does it foster dialogue? Clearly not.

So today, when our sides have at least exchanged some views and if we see that there may be a solution as a result of a bilateral dialogue, we need to find a way to speak to those people. Why should Russia not also speak to them? Why does Russia not explain to them what it is doing in their country? It could be called mercenary activities rather than assistance. That is fuelling the flames of separatism, and it has continued for a long time. It is true that the Government did not do anything for 20 years to resolve the difficulties of the region. It is true that it is a depressed region, where there are no jobs. It is true that a State policy should address that. That has been said. However, it is necessary to assist and not seek to destabilize the situation.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Russian Federation for a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I think that the representative of Ukraine making ironic comments about the Chechens is pointless. I do not understand. He could talk to them. Perhaps that could lead to a diaologue with the people in the southeast of Ukraine. But I will not go further into that issue.

I will say that I liked the fact that at the very end of his remarks, he nevertheless gave an objective assessment of what is happening in southeast Ukraine. He talked about the poverty of that region. That is something that we should discuss. But talking about artillery strikes and bombardments will not resolve the poverty.

I do not know whether the Ukrainian television showed it or not, but when the the people of Donetsk and Luhansk turned out for the referendum on 11 May it was not just a handful of people. It is a region of, I believe, 7 million residents in Donetsk and Luhansk together. Absolutely nothing was done to engage in a respectful dialogue with them. I do not know. If there have been some events that have drawn attention to the region, I hope that that will lead to constructive actions. But we have not seen that. Stop the military operations. Then perhaps we would help to establish a dialogue. That is what we have always said. Let us move forward and start a dialogue. Russia is ready to assist in establishing a dialogue.

Russia came to Geneva and we drew up an agreement. But what did we see the Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv do? We saw them undertake punitive operations in violation of that agreement. So what happened to dialogue? We have always been ready to assist in setting up a dialogue and stand ready to do so now. So we hope that the military operation will stop as soon as possible, because how can we help while it continues? How can we assist in establishing dialogue in the southeastern regions if there is killing there? It is very difficult for us to talk about dialogue.

As is known, in our country there are many ties with Ukraine, and 3 million of its people are dual citizens of Ukraine and Russia. Whether they have Russian passport and Moscow residency is not significant because they may have 30 relatives living in Ukraine, and so on. So that is what I mean. It is very difficult to say who is Russian, who is Ukrainian and who is half Russian and half Ukrainian.

We all know that. Let us try to end on a constructive note. We agree that in that region there is a very difficult socioeconomic situation.

The Ukrainian representative also mentioned Crimea. As he asked a question, I, too, will ask one. That is, why was the water shut off in Crimea? Why was the water supply in Crimea stopped? The economic situation is still bad 25 years after Ukrainian independence, and the water is shut off?

It is clear that there is a poor socioeconomic situation in the east of the country. Let us together try to solve the issue. Let us cooperate. Can Russia and the Ukraine cooperate economically? Does the representative recall those serious proposals that we made? They were ongoing right up to time of the coup d'état that took place on 22 February. So Ukraine turned its back on all that. Now Ukraine talks of closing the border with Russia and leaving the Commonwealth of Independent States. It can clearly do that. There would not be free trade with us. But as for the issues of bilateral relations and cooperation in our region, what we now see is a military operation near the Russian border fanning the flames of anti-Russian rhetoric or policy. That is not constructive.

I hope that Ukraine carefully reads the statements made by our Government. There are very constructive. I hope that the representative has listened closely to

our statement today, which, in addition to its possible criticism also contains a number of constructive ideas as part of our policy on Ukraine.

So we would like to turn the page as soon as possible, but much depends on Ukraine. First, it must stop the military chaos in the east of the country.

I have already said this, but it was of course very difficult to listen to everything. The representative of Lithuania said that an Italian journalist had been killed but not by whom. The whole way in which when the Ukrainian armed forces do something, it is not mentioned. The representative of Luxembourg, who always talks a great deal about the humanitarian matters, spoke little about that.

I recall the meeting on Crimea, when Ukrainian soldiers were killed. Some people thought they died as a result of Russian bullets. Then when the pro-Russian forces made it known that they were sniper bullets, the Security Council immediately expressed its condolences. Now dozens of people, including residents, are being killed in the east of the country. Some Council members say that the Kyiv authorities are showing exceptional restraint. That is very surprising.

Why are we gathering today? If it is for the Security Council to undertake its political function, let us demonstrate how to put an end to the violence as quickly as possible. I perhaps heard another useful point from my Ukrainian colleague when he welcomed the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General could perhaps immediately stop the violence because the Ukrainian representative will soon welcome his role in ending the violence in the east of Ukraine. Let us do that in order to put an end to it.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, who has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I have listened to the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation, and I believe that the easiest way for his side to move forward would be as follows. He has told us what we should do, so I should like to tell him what Russia should do.

The Russian Government, the Minister for Foreign Affairs or whoever makes the decisions should appeal to their people, and first and foremost to the Chechen leadership. Instead of conducting manoeuvres during the presidential elections in Donetsk, those hundreds of Chechens should immediately leave Ukraine. That is the first requirement.

Secondly, with respect to the hundreds of Cossacks in Ukraine, as I recall the President of the Russian Federation took a decision regarding the presence of the Russian army. The presence of those Cossacks is therefore subject to a dual interpretation. It would thus be only right for Russia to call on them, too, to leave my country. Such an appeal could also be directed to Russian citizens who, for lack of direction, sign on as mercenaries. It would also be right to warn them against acting on their impulses.

With respect to Crimea, we have been in contact with the occupying Power concerning the issue of water. This is an economic problem, but the most pressing issue in Crimea has yet to be resolved. Crimea is Ukrainian territory, and we must resolve the issue of its restoration to Ukraine. That is our principled position. No one is rejecting Crimea. That is an issue we could consider together in negotiations.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a final statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am not certain how the representative of Ukraine wishes to engage in dialogue with us, but we believe that negotiations should address the broader agenda of our relations. They cannot be dictated by Kyiv on one, two, three or four specific points; they should be based on a broad agenda concerning our relations. I believe that there are good prospects for interraction between our two countries, so we should seek to develop them constructively and to find a way out of this difficult juncture in our relations and in the history of Ukraine as soon as possible.

Russia did not cause the events in Ukraine, but we remain ready to help Ukraine find a solution if it can make the appropriate decisions. A very interesting and positive opportunity is available to Ukraine now that it has elected a President, who will shortly assume his mandate. He must take the right decisions, rather than measures that would only perpetuate the current stalemate.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.